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ABSTRACT

The following position statements regarding school reorganization are discussed in chapter-by-chapter sequence within the paper: (1) It is the responsibility of all schools, regardless of size, to prepare students adequately to live full and productive lives in a rapidly changing world. (2) In New York State, school district reorganization, while encouraged by State Education Department policy, is still a matter of local option. (3) Small rural school districts, with their limited local tax base, depend on strong financial support from the State. In recent years, State support has been declining. (4) Reorganization means neither saving money nor increasing expenditures; however, reorganized districts receive important financial benefits from incentive and special building aid. (5) Schools must offer a broad range of courses to meet individual needs and offer students an opportunity to survey many areas of interest as well as concentrate in a few with special appeal. Reorganized school districts offer students a much wider variety of formal courses and cocurricular activities. (6) The well-trained teacher is the most important single element in any school district. Small schools have problems in getting, keeping, and using teachers. (AL)

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SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION:

Can Small Schools Compete?

A Position Paper

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PREFACE

This position paper supporting school district reorganization was originally written as a series of newspaper articles for publication in the Olean Times Herald. The articles were requested by a number of chief school administrators in neighboring Allegany County whose school districts were planning for a vote on merger. It was felt that there was a need for an outside agency to present an objective picture of the educational benefits of merger.

Not only did the articles meet the immediate needs of those administrators, they also gave the Western New York School Development Council an opportunity to offer clear answers, based on research, to many questions that would be of general interest to any district thinking about merger. On the basis of its study, the Council found that the educational advantages available in larger school districts could not be matched in the smaller districts, even with greatly increased expenditures.

The original intent of this paper was to generate strong support for a favorable vote in the four school districts of Belmont, Friendship, Angelica and Belfast. Unfortunately, that support never developed. In spite of the paper's inability to meet its specific purpose, we feel that it has considerable merit. The arguments can be easily generalized and adopted to advance the cause of reorganization in any school district where merger is an issue.

The Western New York School Development Council is a private, non-profit corporation chartered by the Board of Regents in New York State. It was founded 20 years ago and known until this year as the Western New York School Study Council. In 1966, it became parent to Project Innovation, a Regional Education Center funded under Title III ESEA. This year the two merged and resulted in the new organization. All

school districts, both public and private, are eligible to take advantage of the planning services made available through Federal funds received by the corporation. Certain other services are available to school districts on a fee basis. The Council occasionally accepts contracts to do research studies for State Education Departments, the U.S. Office of Education, and local school districts. A branch office of the Development Council, designed to serve the specific needs of the school districts in Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties, is located at 303 Masonic Temple Building, Olean, New York.

The preparation of this paper involved much time and effort and is not the product of the authors alone. A special word of thanks is extended to Marcia Kasperski, who spent many hours typing the drafts and the final manuscript. Stephanie Christopher not only did the tedious job of editing the manuscript but offered valuable suggestions and criticisms which helped strengthen the arguments presented.

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I

Challenge for Change

> It is the responsibility of all schools, regardless of their size, to adequately prepare students to live full and productive lives in a rapidly changing world.

Education is the Key

A good education is the key to a successful and fulfilling life. In our rapidly changing world, the educational requirements for success have changed greatly in the past 20 years. Yet meeting even these educational requirements will not adequately prepare today's students to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Life is not the same as it was when our parents went to school, and it is evident that the high school senior of today will face new and different challenges 20 years from now.

How is the world changing? The population will continue to increase. The population of the United States is expected to increase more than 50% by the end of the century. This means an additional population of 100 million persons. It is estimated that more than 80% of this population will be living in metropolitan centers.

The population will be mobile. Today, one family in four changes its address every year. With more rapid and efficient transportation facilities, instantaneous communication, and expanding job opportunities available in metropolitan centers, mobility will continue to increase. Com-

petition for jobs will not be confined to the local level: any job opportunity in any part of the country, or any part of the world, will be immediately available to anyone with the necessary qualifications.

The available jobs will require an increasing amount of specialization. Scientific discoveries and technological development will open employment opportunities in many new fields. Thirty years ago only the very forward thinking would have predicted that space science would employ so many people in today's economy.

The future will require people with well-defined and highly-developed skills. Because of automation there will be little need for the untrained laborer. This does not mean that there will be fewer jobs available. It simply means that there will be fewer opportunities in the unskilled labor market. Opportunities in the future will go to those with the best training for the newly-emerging occupations.

Given the rapidly changing scientific and technological nature of our society, training for career roles will require continuous educational programs. Constant learning and constant retraining will be required in nearly every occupation and profession.

Schools Face a Challenge

The duty of preparing today's students to become well-informed, productive and responsibile citizens rests more and more in the hands of the schools. Social pressures are demanding a much earlier start for our children, and the complexity of our world has created the need to continue this education far beyond high school training.

The needs of society demand well-trained, highly-skilled individuals capable of making career choices based on their abilities. Schools can no longer offer their students a curriculum based on little more than the three r's. Nor will the heavily-weighted academic program serve the needs

of all the students. While there will be an ever-increasing need for professionals, there will also be a greater demand in the technical trades, service occupations and scientific fields.

Because it was unable to do the job, the one-room school house of the past was forced to give way to the more efficient and effective educational program of the central school district. Today the small central school faces a similar challenge. The demands of vocational education and college entrance require students to make important educational choices very early. Before a student leaves ninth grade, he must select a vocational, college entrance, or general course of study. That students make these choices at such an early level places an important responsibility upon the school. In today's society, schools must offer a curriculum that accounts for the needs of all students: the vocational, the college-bound, and the general student.

The college-bound student having only the minimum number of courses in each subject will find it almost impossible to keep up with his classmates in his college freshman year. The general courses taken in his home district by the student attending an area vocational school must be related to his vocational program. The student following a general program who wishes to delay his career choice must have the opportunity to sample a wide variety of courses and activities in order to make his decision wisely.

The high school education of today is merely a base; a stepping-off point for further education and training not only in traditional college programs but in fields such as digital computer science or transistorized communication systems. In 1968 two-thirds of New York State's high school graduates enrolled in some type of post-secondary educational or training program. Of these, 40% entered four-year institutions, 20% enrolled in two-year institutions, and seven percent selected some other form of training.

Schools must prepare students to qualify for satisfactory employment and make a social contribution regardless of where they eventually live. Schools cannot be content simply to prepare their students for life within their immediate environment. Population projections prepared by the Office of Planning Coordination indicate that a large percentage of students presently graduating from the high schools in Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties will live their adult years somewhere other than the two counties.

In any age grouping, there are people who are moving into a county as well as people who are moving out. The decrease which occurs in the number of persons in a particular age group over a period of time is the net out-migration.

In Cattaraugus County the net out-migration in the first 10 years after high school (the 20 to 30 age group) is over 15%. In the second 10 years following high school (the 30 to 40 age group) there is another decrease of about 14%. In Allegany County the net out-migration is about 23% in the first 10 years following high school and 19% in the second 10 years.

These statistics suggest that as many as half the students finishing high school in Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties will not be living in these counties 20 years from now. This implies an obligation for schools to prepare the students to adjust to a variety of employment and social settings.

Local communities and the State share the responsibility for providing the best possible educational program; one which will offer students a life of fulfillment and security. This implies an obligation to offer each student the most diversified and complete education required to compete in today's complex world. Denial of this obligation is an injustice and a

waste of our most precious commodity, human resources. Whether the student attends a high school of 3000 students or one of 300 students, the needs of all students must be met. Yesterday's educational program was good enough for us. Today's student needs something better.

Can Small Schools Compete?

Two-thirds of the school districts in the three Southern Tier counties of Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua presently have enrollments of fewer than 1200 students. Nineteen percent, or nine schools, have enrollments of fewer than 600 students. Can schools this small be justified when we measure the educational mileage schools get for the tax dollar they spend?

Does school size influence a district's ability to offer a quality educational program for all its students? Let us ask the question in a more immediate and direct way. Is it necessary for small school districts to reorganize into larger units in order to do a better job, and at the same time, get more for their money?

Much has been written about both sides of the question. There have been frequent discussions, almost always conducted at an emotional level. But these have yet to resolve the issue.

Recent research studies have attempted to show the effect of school district size on the cost and quality of education. In the articles that follow, we will draw on various studies of comparative class size, curricular offerings, and expenditure level. In addition to other sources, we will use studies of western New York schools which have been conducted by the School Development Council.

We must admit at the outset that we are not uncommitted on the issue of school district reorganization. We intend to be as objective as possible in dealing with the various arguments. However, our intensive study

in the preparation of this series of articles has left us convinced that reorganization results in important educational benefits. It has also convinced us that these benefits more than compensate for any disadvantages.

In future articles we will discuss what school district reorganization means, what it entails, and its implications for school finance, curriculum and staffing.

II

State Policy and Local Option

In New York State school district reorganization, while encouraged by State Education Department policy, is still a matter of local option.

Size Makes a Difference

If their programs are to compete with those of larger districts, small schools must spend more. Students in small districts deserve the same variety of courses and activities, the same special services, and the same facilities available to students in larger schools. These things simply cost more to provide for small student populations.

School district size has been an important consideration in the State Education Department's policy for granting aid to schools. The State has granted size correction aid for many years. Size correction aid to small districts has been justified on the basis of the acknowledged higher cost of educating students in a district with few students distributed over a fairly large geographical area. This bonus to small school districts is felt to be not only legitimate but necessary by both local school boards and the State Education Department. Recent changes in education law would eliminate size correction aid in 1970-71.

Reorganization of smaller districts into larger units has been the State Education Department's policy for more than 30 years. In the late 1930's and early 1940's, it became financially prohibitive for small school districts to operate one-room elementary schools and pay individual tuition costs for students to attend a distant high school. Lack of continuity in the educational program as well as a growing demand for special services (physical education, hot lunches, art, music, kindergarten) not available in one-room schools hastened early school centralization.

Any school district that has the word "Central" in its name is already part of the continuing process of developing economically efficient and educationally effective school systems. However, most rural central schools are still too small. Few are able to offer a program which will meet the needs of all students: the vocational, the college-bound, and the general student.

Serious study of the problem of school district reorganization led to the development of The Master Plan for School District Reorganization proposed in 1947 and revised in 1958. In much of the state the 1958 revision still stands as basic State Education Department policy. However, it is being reviewed in several areas across the state by State Education Department in cooperation with all school districts named in the state plan.

One area recently reviewed included Cattaraugus, Allegany and Steuben Counties. In its review, the State Education Department sought the opinion and recommendations of administrators and board members of all the districts involved. A revision of the state plan based on this study released in June, 1969, is more flexible than the earlier plans. It allows for several possible combinations of districts and provides for periodic review.

Guidelines for School District Size

According to the Report and Recommendations of the Joint Review of the State Plan for Reorganization of School Districts in Cattaraugus, Allegany, and Steuben Counties, issued June, 1969, "There is ample evidence to indicate that present educational practices and imminent future developments require a district with 5000 to 6000 pupils in order to provide. . . a desirable situation on an economical basis." However, local factors, principally geography, have been taken into consideration. As a result, rural districts with as few as 2500 students and occasionally even fewer, are acceptable. (An Angelica, Belfast, Belmont, Friendship merger would result in a 2100 pupil district.)

The New York State recommendation of from 5000 to 6000 students is suggested as the minimum size necessary to offer a quality educational program. Of 11 different statements on school district size studied by the School Development Council, the average minimum size recommended was at least 5000 students. The optimum school district size for meeting the needs of individual students while getting the most for each dollar spent was between 10,000 and 50,000 students.

Mandates, Incentives and Options

While the State has the power to mandate school district boundaries, it insists that such boundaries be determined by local action in each district that would be affected by reorganization. This local action involves petitioning the State Commissioner of Education to lay out the boundaries of a new district. Upon his recommendation and a favorable vote of the people, the new district is established.

Throughout the country, State Education Departments have taken different approaches to the matter of school district reorganization. For

example, the Department of Public Instruction in Pennsylvania has mandated reorganization in districts which fail to merge on their own initiative. In many cases all the schools in a county have been combined into a single district. Florida has taken a similar approach.

As rising costs continue to increase taxes, it is possible that the New York State Legislature may, at some future time, enact legislation mandating reorganization. It is not considered likely that this will happen soon.

For the present, New York State prefers to encourage school district reorganization by making merger a necessary condition for secondary building aid and by offering financial incentives to districts for reorganization. The school districts listed for reorganization under the state plan are, for the most part, rural districts with relatively low wealth. State aid in these districts typically supports more than 60% and often as much as 80% of the per pupil expenditure. Even at this support level, small rural districts face financial difficulties. The promise of additional state aid becomes a powerful incentive for reorganization.

The State insists that any school construction in small districts take into account the state plan. To receive aid for construction the district must justify the use of that building in event the district reorganizes and constructs a central high school building. It must also demonstrate that the construction would not delay or "impede" reorganization. This is enforced by requiring schools listed in the Master Plan for School District Reorganization to make application for a certification of non-impedence.

Procedures for Reorganization

Education law establishes procedures for four different types of school district reorganization: Districts may be centralized or recen-

tralized; City school districts may be enlarged by adding adjoining territory; Territory may be annexed by an already existing central school district; Common school districts may be consolidated. Only the first three possibilities exist for the schools of Allegany and Cattaraugus Counties.

The most common form of school district reorganization involves the joining together, or recentralization, of two or more central school districts. The law allows the State Commissioner of Education to take the lead in defining the new district. In practice, however, the initiative is left with the local community.

Each district seeking reorganization must petition the Commissioner of Education to authorize a new central school district. The petition must be signed by a strong majority of the eligible voters in the district. Signing the petition is not a vote for merger, nor is it necessary for a signer to favor school district reorganization. The signer is simply indicating that he wishes the issue to be brought to public referendum.

In response to the petition, the Commissioner lays out the boundaries of the new central district and designates a time and place for a local vote on the issue. A simple majority of all the votes cast determines the result. The final step is the election of a Board of Education of the new central district.

A city school district may merge with other districts that are on its boundary. Such a merger requires the Commissioner of Education to define the area that is to be joined, the city Board of Education to pass a favorable resolution, and voter approval in the outlying districts.

Because city districts exist under a different law, city voters do not participate in the referendum. City districts are bound by constitutionally prescribed tax and debt limitations which do not apply to

central school districts. For this reason, voters in city districts do not vote on school budget or bond issues except under special circumstances.

After reorganization, voters in the attached area participate in all rights enjoyed by city voters, including the election of school board members. The bonded indebtedness of the adjoining district and city school district is merged.

The importance of local initiative in circulating petitions and in voting on merger issues guarantees, for the present at least, school district reorganization as a local option.

Summary

School district size has been and remains a basic concern of the State. The desire to provide the best possible education for students in sparsely populated areas is reflected in the granting of size correction aid and the policy of encouraging small schools to reorganize into larger units.

New York State encourages small districts to reorganize by withholding secondary building aid from districts which do not reorganize and by offering special aid to districts which do. However, the initiative for the process of reorganization must be supplied at the local level.

In the remaining articles we will explore what it means to a local school district when it exercises its option to become part of a larger, reorganized district. In those articles we will consider the financial, curricular, and staffing implications of this option.

III

Financing the Small District

Small rural school districts, with their limited local tax base, depend on strong financial support from the State. In recent years State support has been declining.

Historically, the State Education Department has recognized that small school districts cost more to operate. It has recommended that school districts have between 5000 and 6000 students, but permits reorganized school districts of approximately 3000 students in rural areas because of geographical limitations. The creation of any school district smaller than 3000 pupils requires special approval from the State Education Department.

For years rural school districts have received special consideration from the New York State Legislature. Small school districts had difficulty recruiting teachers and had many very small classes. Because student populations were sparse, transportation costs were relatively higher in less populous districts. For these reasons, the State committed a greater percentage of its financial resources to rural districts. In addition to paying them a larger percentage of operating aid, the State has granted rural school districts financial support known as size correction aid and transportation aid.

Aid for Approved Operating Expenses

Approved operating expenses are those educational expenses other than capital outlay and debt service, cafeteria, transportation, and BOCES expenses. Those expenditures not aided by the State as approved operating costs are aided through other special formulas.

The State has always aided approved operating expenses for each school district. In fact, New York State has provided national leadership in its program of giving financial support to local schools. The State's general aid program is based upon the concept of equity. Local districts are aided by the State in proportion to their financial ability. Therefore, wealthy districts receive a smaller share of State funds while less wealthy districts receive a larger share.

The present formula for aiding approved operating expenses of school districts works in the following manner. The State has agreed to pay a share of the first $760 in per pupil expenditure for every public school district in the state. The State share varies according to the financial ability of each local district. In the district of average wealth, the State share is 49% and the local share is 51%. In the poorest districts, the State contributes 90% while the local school district pays 10% of the first $760 per pupil. The wealthiest districts of the State are guaranteed a minimum grant of $274 per pupil. The relative wealth of a district determines where it lies between the two extremes.

Any expenditure exceeding the $760 per pupil State aid ceiling must be paid entirely from local funds. Few, if any, school districts in the State spend less than $760 for the education of each student.

Size Correction Aid

School districts receive size correction aid on each of their first 1500 students. This means that most Cattaraugus and Allegany County dis-

tricts are small enough to receive size correction aid on all of their students.

The size correction formula allows a district to receive an additional 10% of the approved operating expenditures (up to the $760 per pupil ceiling) on each student up the the 1500 pupil limitation. This can add up to a considerable amount of money: Cattaraugus County will receive nearly $840,000 in size correction aid this year; Allegany County will receive about $672,000.

Large schools also receive size correction aid for each pupil in excess of 8000 enrolled in the district.

Transportation Aid

New York State Law mandates the transportation of all students living more than a specified distance from the school they are required to attend. Since this law works a hardship on school districts having a widely distributed population, the State has agreed to pay 90% of the approved transportation expenses in all districts. Because of the geographical distribution of their population, rural school districts have benefited from this practice.

Changes in State Aid

Major changes in state aid to education we enacted through Chapter 183 of the Laws of 1969 and unless repealed will be effective for the 1970-71 school year. Chapter 183 would change the sharing of approved operating expenses in districts of average wealth from 51% local and 49% State to 54% local and 46% State. The State share in other districts would be reduced in approximately the same proportion. Size correction aid would be completely eliminated. Transportation aid would no longer be 90% in all districts, but would instead be computed according to the aid ratio for approved operating expenditures effective in the district.

BOCES and the Freeze

Because of their small size, rural school districts share many services through Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). For example, a small district has neither the demand nor the financial ability to employ a full-time school psychologist. Through BOCES, two or more districts are able to share the expense and the services of a psychologist. A wide range of services is shared through BOCES in this manner.

Schools also contract with BOCES for the education of students with special needs, such as the mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed. School districts in both Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties participate in programs of occupational education operated by BOCES. As the occupational centers grow and new buildings are constructed, student participation will increase.

Schools are now receiving their normal ratio of state aid on the costs of services contracted through BOCES. Chapter 183 would impose a 10% limit for aid purposes on any increases in BOCES services in 1970-71. It is expected that the costs of inflation alone will result in about an 8% expenditure increase in 1970-71. For practical purposes, the 10% limitation would freeze programs contracted through BOCES at about their present level. This would also limit other important and growing programs available to participating districts through BOCES.

Full implementation of Chapter 183 would mean a $1,173,000 loss in state aid in 1970-71 for Cattaraugus County; Allegany County would lose $881,000. Such substantial losses of state aid, coupled with the rising costs of goods and services, would dramatically increase the local share of school costs and cause tax rates to spiral upward. Research by the Western New York School School Development Council has predicted the impact of Chapter 183 on full value tax rates of school districts in the three Southern Tier Counties of Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua.

Summaries of the data for Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties are illustrated in the graph on page 18.

Because of the severe financial crisis for schools implicit in the provisions of the new law, legislators, as well as the Governor, have recently become more favorable to restoring some, and possibly all, of the state aid to schools which Chapter 183 was designed to withhold. Restoration of the aid does not mean that the money would be distributed to local schools under the terms of the old aid formula. Rather, there will probably be changes in the allocation of State funds to local districts.

Restoration of size correction aid is certain to be resisted by lawmakers on the grounds that the State inconsistently offers incentives for school district reorganization while at the same time paying schools a bonus (size correction aid) for staying small.

The chart illustrating how important size correction aid is to the total state aid received by the schools in Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties can be seen on page 19.

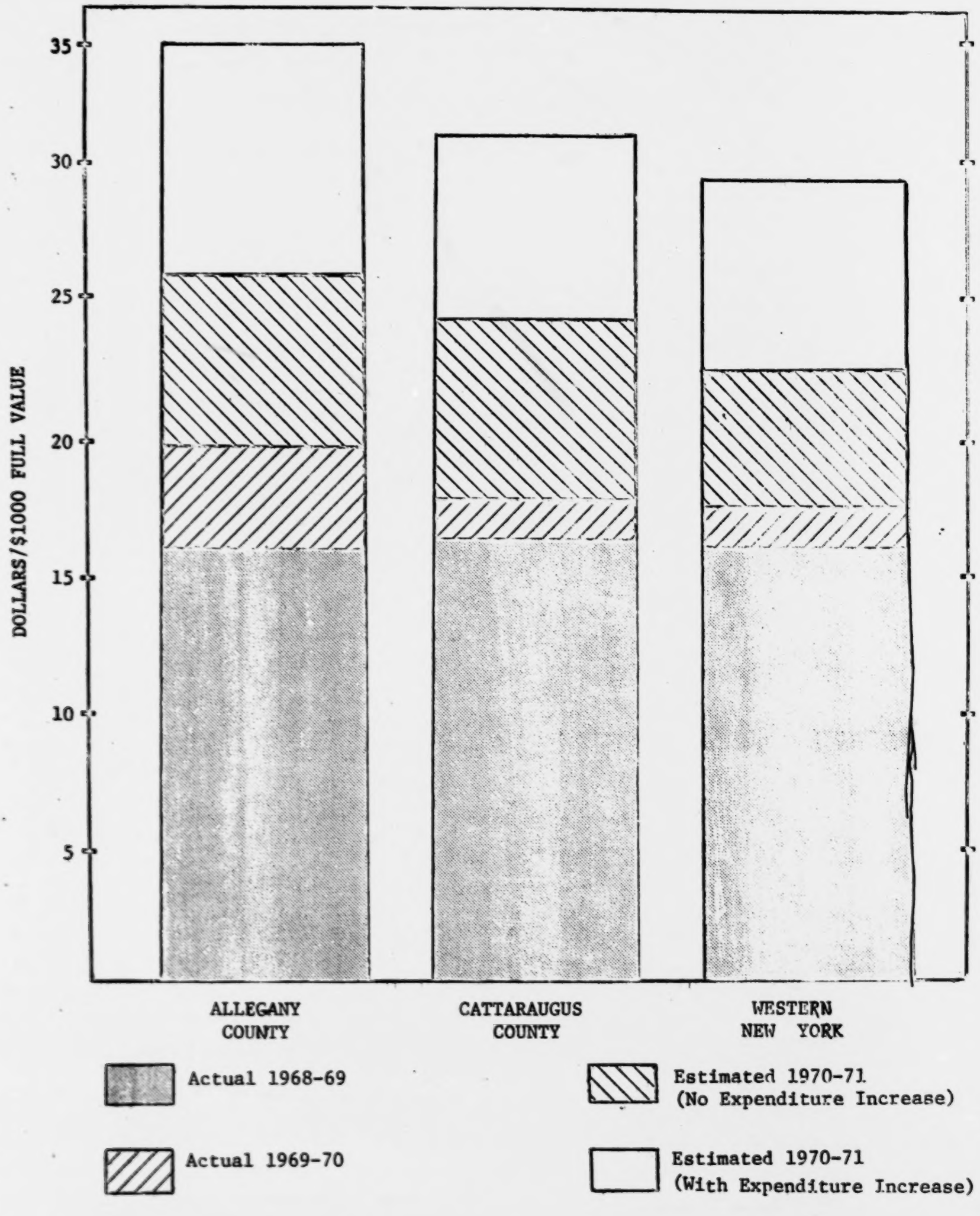
Rural Schools Hardest Hit

A research study involving school budget simulation was recently conducted by the Western New York School Development Council. Twenty-two school boards from all parts of the state simulated the preparation of 1970-71 budgets for their districts, taking into account the losses in state aid as indicated in the new law. All participating school districts were faced with dramatic tax increases (an average tax rate increase of 26.5%) even though most school districts made considerable cuts in program. The simulation exercise showed the new law to have the greatest impact on the rural school districts in the sample (an average tax rate increase of 33%).

MEDIAN ACTUAL AND PROJECTED TAX RATES/$1000

FULL VALUE, 1968-69 THROUGH 1970-71

ALLEGANY AND CATTARAUGUS COUNTIES



PERCENT OF ESTIMATED 1970-71 STATE AID LOSS
ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE ELIMINATION OF SIZE CORRECTION AID

ALLEGANY COUNTY				CATTARAUGUS COUNTY			
District	Total Aid Loss	Size Correction Aid Loss	Percent of Total	District	Total Aid Loss	Size Correction Aid Loss	Percent of Total
Alfred-Almond	$ 88,145	$ 64,000	72.6%	Allegany	$ 119,436	$ 81,000	67.8%
Andover	51,337	43,000	83.7%	Cattaraugus	85,074	62,000	72.8%
Angelica	34,871	30,000	86.0%	Ellicottville	80,195	60,000	74.8%
Belfast	41,981	33,000	78.6%	Franklinville	85,489	62,000	72.5%
Belmont	49,876	41,000	82.2%	Hinsdale	65,625	49,000	74.6%
Bolivar	70,821	59,000	83.3%	Limestone	32,549	26,000	79.8%
Canaseraga	40,596	34,000	83.7%	Little Valley	50,227	40,000	79.6%
Cuba	81,906	66,000	80.5%	Olean	166,405	74,000	44.4%
Fillmore	78,731	61,000	77.4%	Pioneer	184,450	83,000	44.9%
Friendship	49,179	44,000	89.4%	Portville	114,937	93,000	80.9%
Richburg	35,231	31,000	87.9%	Randolph	116,810	91,000	77.9%
Rushford	41,347	23,000	55.6%	Salamanca	127,314	92,000	72.2%
Scio	48,841	40,000	81.8%	West Valley	44,462	27,000	60.7%
Wellsville	141,103	79,000	55.9%				
Whitesville	27,304	24,000	87.8%				
TOTAL	$881,269	$672,000	76.2%	TOTAL	$1,272,973	$840,000	65.9%

Because of their limited local tax base, rural districts are extremely vulnerable to any shifts in State support for education. In general, the smaller the district the greater the vulnerability. In recent years the State has set a trend of sharing a continuously decreasing percentage of the total cost of education in rural school districts. In Cattaraugus County the State's share has dropped from 71% of the total cost of public education in 1964-65 to an estimated 53% for 1970-71. In Allegany County the State's share has dropped from 74% to 59% during the same period of time.

The point is that even if the Legislature restores the aid cuts and increases the aid ceiling, small rural school districts will still be in deep financial trouble.

Building and Incentive Aid

Studies show that school district reorganization means neither saving money nor increasing expenditures. Expenditure levels do not tend to vary greatly when school districts merge. However, reorganization allows districts to provide more services to students without increasing the expenditure level.

The State gives considerable financial help to school districts willing to reorganize. Any school district completing merger is eligible for two kinds of state aid: building aid and incentive aid. Unless extended by a vote of the Legislature, incentive aid will not be available after September, 1970.

If a group of school districts reorganize and the new district decides to construct a school building, special supplemental building aid is available. The State is required to pay an additional 25% of any construction costs incurred in reorganization up to a maximum of 95% of the total cost. Most rural school districts would be eligible for the maximum building aid allowable under this provision.

During the first few years after reorganization, a school district is eligible for incentive aid. For the first five years the State will pay an additional 10% of the approved operating expenditures, with the maximum State share at 90%. After five years at this level, the incentive aid is decreased one percent yearly for 10 years or until the normal aid level of the district is reached. A reorganized school district could receive incentive aid from the State for as long as 15 years.

Summary

We have indicated that all New York State schools are presently facing a fiscal crisis. Small rural school districts have been and will continue to be the hardest hit by any changes in school support. These districts have a limited tax base, and relatively few services can be cut from their budgets without seriously hurting the total program. We have implied that school district reorganization would decrease rural school districts' vulnerability to financial pressures. We have described special State assistance (building aid and incentive aid) available to reorganized districts. We have not yet shown in concrete terms the financial implications of reorganization for the individual school district and the local taxpayer.

In the next article we will show what school district reorganization means in financial terms to a typical school district. Using existing laws and regulations we will make financial comparisons for this district under two sets of circumstances: reorganized and go-it-alone. We will show the full value property tax rates necessary to operate the educational program of the typical district under each circumstance.

IV

What Will It Cost?

School district reorganization means neither saving money nor increasing expenditures. However, reorganized districts receive important financial benefits from incentive and special building aid.

Merger Raises Questions

What does it mean to a local taxpayer that his school district is contemplating reorganization with other districts? Does merger carry hidden costs? Is it more expensive or less to operate a newly-reorganized school district? What will happen to the local tax rate? These are legitimate questions for any concerned taxpayer, and clear answers are required.

We have already indicated that small rural school districts, like most of those in Allegany and Cattaraugus Counties, are facing financial difficulties. Part of the difficulty results from the impending cutbacks in state aid implicit in Chapter 183 of the Laws of 1969 and which would apply to all districts in the state in 1970-71.

The most serious threat lies in the possible, even probable, loss of size correction aid, a measure aimed specifically at small rural school districts. While there are encouraging signs that some of the state aid may be restored by the current Legislature, it is less likely that size

correction aid will be fully reinstated. Rural schools face, at best, financial uncertainty, at worst, the possibility of sharp increases in local tax rates.

We have also said that the State wants larger school districts and is willing to pay for them. It encourages school district reorganization through the payment of incentive aid and special building aid.

The Cost to Go It Alone

How do these factors affect the financial picture in a particular school district? Rather than discuss the situation which exists in a single, specific district, we will create a hypothetical district typical of those in Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties.

We will call our district Treehaven Central School and for its characteristics will use the median size, wealth, expenditure level, state aid ratio, and true value tax rate of school districts in the two counties. We will also show differences in categories within budgets by comparing the expenditure of a group of small districts to those of a group of larger districts.

Treehaven Central School has a small enrollment. The typical district in the two counties has only about 800 pupils. In the eight Western New York Counties the average enrollment is 3400 pupils. In New York State (exclusive of New York City) the average public school enrollment is 2900 pupils.

Treehaven is a relatively poor district. The wealth of school districts is measured in terms of the full valuation of the real property per pupil. The typical district in Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties has a full valuation of about $13,000 per pupil. This compares with a full value per pupil of $19,000 for western New York and $32,000 for all public school districts in the state.

Treehaven spends well below the state average for approved operating expenditures. In 1969-70 the median district in Allegany and Cattaraugus will spend about $850 per pupil for approved operating expenditures. Western New York schools average $900 and the State as a whole spends $1050.

Treehaven must depend on the State for a large share of its revenue. In the typical district in the two counties, the State pays 79% of the first $760 per pupil in approved operating expenditures. This means that for every pupil enrolled in Treehaven Central, the State contributes $600 (79% of $760). The difference between the $600 per pupil received in state aid and the $850 per pupil that Treehaven spends must be raised from local property taxes.

To raise the $250 per pupil which is the local share of its approved operating expenditures, Treehaven's tax rate must be set at about $19 per $1000 in full valuation.

Treehaven's 79% state aid compares to the 49% which applies to the district of average wealth in the State. Its full value tax rate of $19 is slightly higher than the western New York average of $18.31. However, until this year Treehaven's tax rate had been considerable less than the western New York average. The average New York State full value tax rate for 1969-70 is not available, but the average tax rate in the state has generally been higher than that for western New York or the two counties under consideration.

The possibility of a large tax increase looms for Treehaven next year. If Chapter 183 of the Laws of 1969 remains in effect, the typical district in Allegany and Cattaraugus Counties will lose about $68,000 in state aid. With Treehaven's tax base, a full value tax increase of $6.54 will be needed to make up this amount locally.

The school districts in Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties must increase their budgets by 8 to 10% next year if they are to continue the same program they are offering this year. For Treehaven this would mean an approved operating expenditure increase of about $70 per pupil or a total budget increase of $56,000. This amount would carry a local tax bill of an additional $5.34 per $1000 full valuation.

If Treehaven wishes to do in 1970-71 what it is doing today, it must plan to increase its full value tax rate by $11.88. When this amount is added to its present tax rate of $19, Treehaven is confronted with the possibility of $30.88 full valuation tax rate in 1970-71.

The Cost of Reorganization

Let us imagine another set of circumstances which could exist in Treehaven. We have shown the approximate cost in 1969-70 and 1970-71 to the Treehaven taxpayer if his district continues to go it alone. Now let us consider how existing laws would apply to the same district if it were to reorganize with other districts.

Suppose Treehaven and two adjacent districts have received an affirmative vote from the people, and the New York State Commissioner of Education has defined the boundaries of a reorganized central school district. The new district, which we shall call Union Central, has 3000 students.

Since Treehaven is very much like its neighbors, we will assume that Union's characteristics are the same as those of Treehaven. Union is also a relatively poor district with a full valuation of $13,000 per pupil. It is, therefore, eligible for 79% state aid. Since studies show that reorganization tends to neither increase nor decrease expenditures, we will assume that Union Central has an approved operating expenditure of $850 per pupil this year (the same as Treehaven).

Union Central School District qualifies for 79% state aid under normal circumstances. However, since it is a newly-reorganized district, Union is eligible for incentive aid. It can, in fact, receive the 10% maximum allowable under law. This qualifies Union for 89% state aid in 1969-70. For every pupil enrolled in Union Central, the State contributes $676 (89% of $760). This leaves $174 per pupil that Union must raise from local property taxes. To raise this amount Union must tax at the rate of $12.60 per $1000 in full valuation.

A school district of the size and general characteristics of Union can expect to lose about $185,000 in state aid in 1970-71 as a result of Chapter 183. To compensate for the aid loss Union must impose a $4.74 full value tax increase.

Applying the inflation rate of 8% we used for Treehaven, we can expect Union's 1970-71 budget to increase by about $70 per pupil for a total of $210,000. Raising this amount will require an additional tax increase of $5.39, making a total full value tax increase of $10.13 for the district. When added to Union's present rate of $12.60, the district can expect a $22.73 full valuation tax rate in 1970-71.

Because it receives incentive aid, the tax rate for the reorganized district (Union) is substantially lower than that for the go-it-alone district (Treehaven). Taxpayers in the reorganized Union School District will pay about $8 less on each $1000 in full value in 1970-71 than neighboring go-it-alone districts.

Union will continue to receive a 10% incentive bonus in operating aid for five years. For the following 10 years the incentive aid will be reduced by 1% each year until the normal aid level is reached.

During these first years of reorganization, Union will probably find it necessary to construct a new senior high school at a cost of about

$3 million. Small districts slated for reorganization are not permitted to build secondary schools since it would impede reorganization. For this reason, most small districts are plagued with undersized classrooms and substandard facilities in their high schools.

Any school construction which results from reorganization is aided at a level of 25% above the existing formula with the maximum aid level at 95%. It is relatively certain that Union would qualify for maximum aid. With the State paying 95% of $3 million construction cost, it would be possible for Union to pay off the remaining 5% in as little as five years while experiencing less than $1 increase in true value tax rate.

How Schools Spend Their Money

Do larger school districts budget their money differently from smaller ones? In an attempt to answer this question, the School Development Council did an analysis of the budgets of the four small districts in Allegany County which are soon to vote on merger. A merger of the four schools would create a district with about 2100 students.

One way to get an indication of how school districts would spend their money if they became part of a merger is to study the fiscal policies of districts which have already reorganized. For comparison we did a similar analysis of the budgets of six larger districts in western New York. The six districts were selected because they are about the same size (2100 pupils) and type (rural central) as would be created if the four-district merger were to be successful. We are using this example even though research indicates a 2100-pupil district is still too small for most purposes. Most studies show that a school district should be at least three times that size or about 6000 students to offer a full program on an economical basis.

This admittedly limited sample showed the small (525 pupil average) and larger (2100 pupil average) districts to be spending nearly the same amount per pupil. The small districts had an average approved operating expenditure of $716 per pupil in 1967-68 while the larger schools averaged $719 per pupil. However, there were important differences in the distribution of expenditures within this amount.

The largest single expenditure in any school budget is for staff salaries and benefits. The small districts spent $17 more per pupil for teacher salaries: $399 per pupil compared to $382 in the larger districts.

In a later article on staffing, we will show why small schools must maintain many very small classes to meet even the most basic student needs. Thus, the ratio of teachers to pupils is greater in small districts, increasing costs.

The total cost for instruction was higher in the group of smaller districts. Instructional costs include, in addition to teachers' salaries, the expenditures for instructional equipment, materials, supplies and textbooks. They also include costs for administration, supervision, and supportive services, such as guidance, psychology, and health services.

The four small school districts spent $577 per pupil for regular instruction while the larger school districts spent $529 per pupil. The difference of $48 per pupil can be attributed to the greater efficiency possible in larger districts. Although their expenditure for instruction was considerably less, the larger districts were able to offer individual students a choice of more than twice the number of courses and activities.

The cost of administration remained about the same. The smaller school districts spent $43.50 per pupil for administration and supervision, and the larger districts spent $43.16 per pupil.

Small school districts spent less than the larger ones for operation and maintenance of the school plant and for transportation. Transportation costs were $54 per pupil in the small districts compared to $63 per pupil in the larger districts. Operation and maintenance costs were $68 per pupil compared to $80 in the larger districts.

Reorganization usually results in the construction of a new central high school to serve the district. Small school districts are prevented from building high schools since it would impede reorganization. For this reason most small high schools are crowded, have substandard classrooms and lack many needed facilities.

The construction of a new high school building results in an increase in plant operation and maintenance costs in the larger districts. The transportation of pupils to the new high schools also adds slightly to district costs.

Summary

The figures presented in this article do not mean that running small schools is less or more expensive than in a reorganized district. They do indicate that districts of different sizes use their money in somewhat different ways. They also show that because of incentives available in state aid, the cost in local real estate taxes is considerable lower in newly-reorganized districts. (See page 30)

Comparative costs mean little unless we also have some way of measuring what schools get for what they spend. In the next two articles we will compare the curriculum and staffing patterns of reorganized and go-it-alone districts.

CHARACTERISTICS, INCLUDING PROJECTED TAX RATES,
OF A TYPICAL DISTRICT UNDER TWO SETS OF
CIRCUMSTANCES: REORGANIZED AND GO IT ALONE

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS	TREEHAVEN (Typical Go-It-Alone District)	UNION (Reorganized District)
Enrollment	800	3,000
Full Valuation/Pupil	$13,000.00	$13,000.00
1969-70		
Approved Operating Expenses/Pupil	$ 850.00	$ 850.00
State Aid/Pupil	$ 600.00	$ 676.00
Local Share/Pupil	$ 250.00	$ 174.00
Percent State Aid	79%	89%*
Full Value Tax Rate	$ 19.00	$ 12.60
1970-71		
Approved Operating Expenses/Pupil**	$ 920.00	$ 920.00
State Aid/Pupil	$ 600.00	$ 600.00
Local Share/Pupil	$ 320.00	$ 244.00
Percent State Aid	79%	89%*
Full Value Tax Rate***	$ 30.88	$ 22.73

* Includes Incentive Aid for Reorganization
** Indicates an 8% increase over previous years
*** Reflects the provisions of the new state aid law effective in 1970-71

The chart above is a comparison of the costs of educating students in a typical, small school district (Treehaven) and in a typical reorganized district (Union). The chart shows the importance of increased state aid available to reorganized school districts. This increased state aid is reflected in the tax rates for each district.

V

From Basic to Enriched Curriculum

Schools must offer a broad range of courses to meet individual needs and offer students an opportunity to survey many areas of interest as well as concentrate in a few with special appeal. Reorganized school districts offer students a much wider variety of formal courses and co-curricular activities.

A changing world offers new challenges and imposes new demands upon the students educated in our schools. Jobs require more specialization, competition for advanced education is keener, and day-to-day life is more complicated than ever before. It is the job of the schools to prepare students to meet these challenges and demands.

Meeting Individual Needs

Students have differing abilities, interests and needs. Schools must be aware of student differences and provide for them in their programs. Both the college preparatory student and the vocational student studying soil testing may require a chemistry background, but one student needs a more theoretical chemistry course and the other a course in practical chemistry. A single course in chemistry will not satisfy both requirements.

To meet the needs of all students, schools should offer at least four, and probably five different sections of each basic course. The four "tracks" should account for the vocational student, the college preparatory student,

and the general student as well as students who require a very basic and simplified program. Many larger districts also offer honors courses to advanced students.

Schools must offer a broad range of courses to meet individual needs and offer students an opportunity to survey many areas of interest. Presently, two-thirds of all New York State high school graduates enroll in some type of post-high school education or training. As a result, high school students are required to make many decisions about further education and vocational interest. They can make these decisions with a better understanding of their likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses if they have had an opportunity to test their interests and abilities in a variety of courses.

Some students have already identified their interests, possess a good understanding of their abilities and have made preliminary career decisions. They should also have the opportunity to take a concentration of courses related to their needs. The school curriculum must have a depth of courses for students who wish to concentrate in a particular area.

Curricular offerings should be supported with related facilities. A good library is essential to all aspects of the educational program; many schools are finding it increasingly important to provide instructional resource or media centers for the use of teachers and students. Language and science laboratories make the related courses more meaningful and increase learning.

In some instances small classes can be justified. Some students may have special needs which require very small classes, and some instructional activities may be most effectively conducted with small groups of students. However, research indicates that as a general rule very small classes (fewer than 12 or 15 students) can be defended neither economically nor educationally.

The small school district has no choice. It must conduct many very small classes if it is to meet student needs.

What type of curriculum is offered in the small high school? We will examine the curriculum of the typical 150-pupil high school, similar in size to those in the four districts in Allegany County which are contemplating merger (Angelica, Belfast, Belmont and Friendship).

A 150-pupil high school can offer no more than two sections of each of the required social studies and English courses. The two sections are usually listed as regents and non-regents. In the small school, scheduling difficulties occur when students try to select needed courses from limited offerings. As a result, there are almost always non-regents students in the regents sections and regents candidates assigned to non-regents classes. No special provision can be made for students who need a very practical or a vocational orientation in their English or social studies program.

Mathematics and science courses in the 150-pupil high school are directed principally toward the needs of the college-bound student. In spite of this academic emphasis, advanced math and science courses are small in size. Chemistry and physics are offered only in alternate years.

The small high school usually offers only one foreign language, seldom in a full four-year language sequence. Curricular areas such as home economics, industrial arts, music and art offer only a minimum of courses to very small classes.

Learning by Doing

A strong co-curricular program is important if schools are to meet their full responsibility to students. Student clubs and activities have a much more important purpose than entertainment. They enrich the curricular program of the schools.

Many co-curricular activities allow students to put into practice what they learn in their classes. In English class a student learns spelling, grammatical construction, and the elements of good literature. Publishing a school newspaper, he can use knowledge and skills gained in the classroom to produce written material for an audience.

Co-curricular activities enable students to learn about and participate in a group process. Unfortunately, most classroom activities are teacher-directed, and student participation consists of meeting responsibilities which are assigned. Co-curricular activities provide a greater opportunity than exists in the classroom for students to organize, cooperate and take leadership in group-centered tasks. Through this process students experience a sense of participation and involvement which helps make school more enjoyable and meaningful. Co-curricular activities also help students learn to use leisure time in constructive and enjoyable ways.

A Basic Curriculum

It is only at great expense that the small school can offer any more than the most basic program. Teachers' salaries represent the largest single item in a school budget. The relationship between what a school district spends and what its students learn is important to taxpayers. Students in a class of 10 seldom learn twice as much or even 5% more than students in a class of 20, but it costs the district twice as much.

An Enriched Curriculum

Reorganization does not make a substantial difference in the elementary school curriculum in most districts. Existing elementary schools usually remain in the local communities and continue much as before merger.

However, the construction of a new central high school frees additional space for elementary school use. This circumstance creates an opportunity for additional activities and increased flexibility in the elementary

program. Some of the adjustments which would strengthen the elementary and junior high school programs include increased access to the gym and auditorium, added space for individualized projects, separate and improved library facilities, art and music rooms, homemaking and industrial arts space and equipment, and the elimination of cafeteria crowding.

Larger school districts can offer a greater variety of electives while scheduling more sections of each constant, or basic course. The Development Council was interested in obtaining information as to exactly how much difference school size would make in the number and variety of courses offered. Since we have no way of knowing what might occur in a specific reorganized district, we examined the curricula of several school districts having student populations of about 2100 and high schools of about 600 students (about the size a four-district merger would create).

We are using the 2100-pupil district for comparison purposes only because it is timely. The 2100-pupil district is still too small to offer all the curricular opportunities that students deserve. Most studies show that a school district should be at least three times that size, or about 6000 students to offer a full program on an economical basis.

As expected, the larger schools offered many more sections of the constant subjects, such as English and social studies. The number of sections scheduled allowed the districts to meet individual needs by tracking students in the manner we have already described. There were enough sections in the math and science courses to allow for similar flexibility.

There were fewer extremes in class size. Very small classes in languages, advanced mathematics, home economics, industrial arts, music and art, so common in the small districts, were not present.

The teacher time saved because basic student needs were being met in more uniformly sized classes was devoted to strengthening the program with additional elective courses.

The foreign language program can be used as an example. Each of the larger districts offered two languages with four year sequence in at least one and sometimes both. The average class size in the language program in the larger districts was 17 pupils. A similar tally of the four small high schools indicated that a four-year language sequence was available in none of the districts and that class size for languages averaged only 12 pupils.

In each case the larger district was able to offer more courses to more students with fewer teacher units than could the combined efforts of the four smaller districts. However, the combined student population of the four smaller districts equaled the average student population in the larger districts.

Our survey indicates that if the four smaller districts elected to reorganize, they could offer their present combined high school population a choice of from 25 to 35 more courses than are available now. This could be done without increasing staff or expenditure. These additional courses would offer students an opportunity both to survey areas of possible interest and to concentrate in areas that already interest them.

A greater variety of formal courses is not the only educational advantage for students in larger school districts. The School Development Council studied the co-curricular opportunities available to students in the small (150-pupil high school) and the larger (600-pupil high school) districts. The larger districts offered their students nearly three times the choice of clubs and activities (exclusive of band, chorus, and interscholastic sports) available in the small districts: an average of 21 activities in the larger districts to eight in the small.

When the selection of activities is limited, many students either do not participate or settle for second best. As the selection becomes broader, all students have a better opportunity to participate in activities

closely related to their individual interests. When the activity suits the needs and interests of the participants, commitment is increased, as is quality.

A Varied Athletic Program

Strong opposition to school district reorganization often centers around concern that in a larger district fewer students have the opportunity to participate in interscholastic sports. It is certainly undeniable that regardless of school size, the number of berths on a varsity basketball team remains the same.

If the primary purpose of interscholastic athletics is to offer students an opportunity to be the star of a team, then chances are probably increased by keeping schools small. It is not uncommon for an individual student in a small school to be a varsity player for three successive years in as many as three different sports. This situation seldom occurs in a larger district.

If, on the other hand, the main purpose of a high school athletic program is to achieve broad and well-balanced participation (free of domination by a few individuals), than a comparison of the programs offered in the small and larger school districts is in order.

The small school (150-pupil high school) is seldom able to support more than three or four varsity sports. These include either football or soccer, basketball, baseball and sometimes track. The small school almost always has a junior varsity basketball schedule, but J.V. competition in other sports is arranged only occasionally.

By comparison, at least eight different league sports are normally scheduled in the larger school districts (600-pupil high school). The larger school also offers a full junior varsity schedule in nearly every major sport. In many cases, separate freshman teams are organized on an

interscholastic basis.

For the two sizes of schools studied there was little difference in the proportion of eligible students participating in interscholastic athletics. However, as district size increases beyond 2000 to 2500 students, the proportion of the student body able to participate in interscholastic sports will decrease.

In addition to a more varied interscholastic program, larger schools had extensive, well-organized intramural athletic programs. These offered competitive opportunities to students whose interests or abilities prevented them from participating interscholastically. Intramural programs for girls were also common in the larger schools.

Athletic programs, if they are considered simply in terms of interscholastic competiton, involve a very high expenditure for few students. To justify this expenditure, schools of any size must broaden their athletic programs to include as many students as possible in a full intramural program for girls as well as boys.

Measures of Success

We have said that a good education is a key to a successful and fulfilling life. We have also said that larger schools offer increased educational opportunities for students, but we have not really dealt with the issue of whether or not school size makes a difference in student success: both in gaining further education and in success on the job.

Studies indicate that students from very small school districts have difficulty being accepted into college programs and adjusting to college life once they are in.

To a great extent, entrance into college depends upon performance on standardized scholastic aptitude tests which are administered to all students. Scores on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT is admin-

istered to high school juniors) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (the SAT is administered to seniors) have been compared by the size of the district. Student performance was found to improve as school district size increased. In school districts with over 6000 students, size of districts was found to have less influence on student standardized test performance.

All students in New York State schools have the opportunity to compete in the State Regents Scholarship Tests. Based on student performance, financial assistance is awarded to high school graduates attending colleges in New York State. Each county of the state is assigned a quota of scholarships based on its student population.

A study of New York State Regents Scholarship awards in Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties indicates that students in larger school districts perform better on these examinations. The School Development Council plotted the number of 1969 scholarship winners and alternates by school district size. The results show quite dramatically that the larger school districts won more Regents Scholarships per 1000 students than did the smaller districts (see graph on page 40).

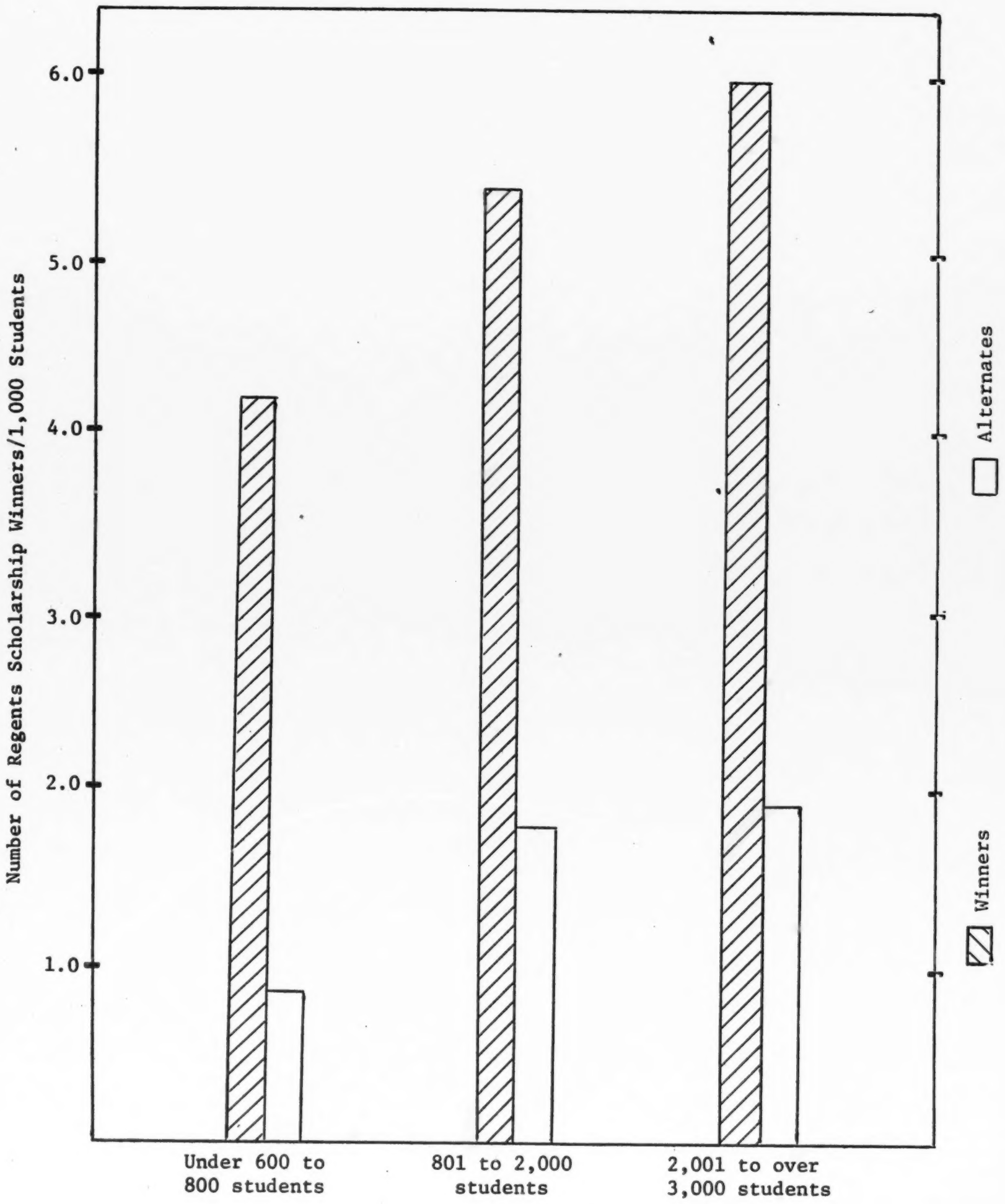
There are other indicators which can be used to measure school quality and student success. The ability of a student to move into an occupation that interests him, the performance of the student on the job, and the degree of civic responsibility which former students exercise are such indicators. But these indicators of success are more difficult to measure and studies do not exist which relate them to size of school district.

Until we do develop dependable measures of how well high school programs prepare students for success in life, it will be necessary to measure school quality in other ways. For this reason, we must support programs which offer students the greatest diversity of choice related to individual interests and needs. We must also rely for the present on measures of academic

CHAUTAUQUA, CATTARAUGUS AND ALLEGANY COUNTIES

Relationship of School District Size
To Regents Scholarship Winners

1969-1970



achievement and standardized test scores. Using these measures, studies indicate that larger school districts offer stronger programs.

VI

They Teach Best What They Enjoy Teaching Most

The well-trained teacher is the most important single element in any school district. Small schools have problems in getting, keeping, and using teachers.

Teachers Are Key to Quality

Certification standards for teachers are more rigorous than ever before. To teach at any level or in any subject area in New York State, a minimum of five years of college is required for permanent certification. Moreover, course work within the five-year program must be selected to meet rather specific requirements. A large percentage of teachers is not content with simply meeting permanent certification requirements, but continues to improve competence by taking additional college credit and inservice courses.

Today's well-trained teacher is the most important single element in any school district, and the most expensive. Teachers' salaries account for 60% of the average district's operating expenditures. In addition, the classroom teacher must have the support of competent administrators, supervisors, and educational specialists.

School districts continuously face the question of how to most effectively and efficiently use their professional staff. Because of the

high cost of personnel, even a slight shift in the ratio of students to teachers can quite dramatically increase the cost of educating each student.

Staffing Practices Vary

The staffing practices of school districts can be compared by examining the number of teachers for each 1000 students in the district. Called the numerical staffing adequacy (NSA), this factor can be computed by dividing the number of teachers by the number of students and multiplying by 1000. The NSA, which can be computed for districts of any size, is a uniform method of comparison.

In making comparisons between small and large districts, the School Development Council also examined numerical staffing adequacies. Again, two groups of districts were studied: a group of small schools with an average enrollment of less than 600 students, and a group of larger schools with an average enrollment of 2100 students.

At the elementary school level, district size had little effect on the ratio of teachers to students. The small districts had an average NSA of 46.8 compared to 46.2 in the larger districts.

A real difference was shown at the high school level. Smaller school districts needed an average of 54 teachers for each 1000 students, while the larger districts averaged only 46 teachers per 1000 students. This difference in the ratio of teachers to students cost the small districts an average of $66 more per pupil. This is based on 1967-68 salary data and would be considerably more at today's costs.

More Teachers--Fewer Courses

Although it took more teachers to staff the classrooms in the smaller districts, students in these schools were offered a much more limited

selection of courses than was available in the larger districts. Within these offerings fewer provisions were made for individual needs, i.e., those of the college-bound, occupational, or general student.

Often larger districts elect to strengthen their program by increasing their professional staff. With more efficient use of classroom teachers, the additional staff is able to perform specialized roles. Through the use of specialists, critical areas such as reading, speech, or mathematics receive the extra attention needed. Specialists may also be used to insure coordination and continuity of the total curricular program.

Of course, small schools also hire curriculum specialists. But it is necessary for small schools to use specialists inefficiently in order to use them at all. Consider the use of a reading specialist. Typically, a small district employs a reading specialist through BOCES for possibly two days each week. His time is shared with one and perhaps two other districts. Because he is unable to be in the district each day, it is difficult for the specialist to achieve continuity in his own program of instruction, much less relate what he is doing to what is happening in the regular classroom.

Small Classes--Not Individualization

Comparing numerical staffing adequacies is not the same as comparing class size. Class sizes vary greatly in both small and large school districts. However, our comparisons show that the variation is greater in smaller districts. Small schools have many students assigned to very small classes. Twenty percent of the classes in the small districts had fewer than 10 students. Only 8% of the larger schools had classes with fewer than 10 students. Forty-three percent of the classes in small schools compared to less than 19% in the larger districts had fewer than 12 students.

This could indicate that the small school districts had adopted a policy of individualized or at least small group instruction. This is not the case.

True individualized instruction involves setting individual objectives for every student and supporting the program with the necessary instructional materials. In most cases, classes of only five students are taught in the same manner as classes of 25 students. Little attention is given to setting individual objectives, in prescribing personalized programs of study, or in providing appropriate instructional materials. Research shows that under these conditions small classes make little difference in the total learning which occurs.

Staffing Problems in Small Schools

Small schools have other problems in getting, keeping and using teachers. Small schools often need teachers with certification in two subject areas. A small district may offer more mathematics courses than one teacher can handle, but too few to justify hiring a second full-time teacher. A possible solution is to hire a teacher with dual certification in math and science and let this teacher handle the extra courses in both subjects.

This creates two problems. Teachers properly certified in two subject areas are difficult to find. The more unrelated the two subject areas, the more difficult the task. Also, the teacher assigned to two subject areas and different courses within each subject area, had difficulty finding adequate preparation time.

This is not a problem limited to teachers with dual certification. In lesser degree, it is a problem common to all teachers in small districts. Often they must prepare for as many as five different courses each day.

It is not uncommon for a teacher in a larger district to teach five sections of the same subject, for example, world history. This does not mean that the teacher can use the same lesson five times, since all classes are different and learn at different rates. It does mean that a teacher can concentrate in an area in which he is well trained, has a deep interest and enjoys teaching.

They Teach Best

We have indicated that a diversity of interests and abilities among teachers tends to enrich the curriculum. Teachers with a variety of backgrounds enrich a school's co-curricular as well as its curricular offerings.

By building into its curriculum activities designed to capitalize on the uniqueness and diversity of its teaching staff, a school system can add to the satisfaction of both students and teachers. The larger the school system, the greater the diversity we can expect to find within its staff.

We contend that teachers teach best when they are teaching what they were trained to teach and what they enjoy teaching most. This means teaching subjects for which they have full certification and in which they have a vital interest. Satisfaction is less likely to occur when teachers are assigned courses for which they lack training and confidence.

Larger districts offer teachers increased opportunity for professional advancement. Such positions as department chairman, or teaching-team leader, as well as administrative posts, exist in greater number in larger districts. For many teachers the prospect of making greater use of their professional skills through advancement adds increased motivation. Larger districts are also better able to help teachers improve their professional skills through inservice training programs.

Recruitment Vexes Small District

Limited advancement opportunities, anemic curricula, requirements of dual certification and the prospect of multiple lesson plans add up to recruitment problems for small districts. In addition, teachers' salaries tend to be slightly lower in the small rural districts. In 1967-68 teachers' salaries in schools of Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties which enrolled less than 1000 students, averaged $8,024, while schools with 1000 students or more were averaging $8,385.

Although the teacher shortage is much less acute than formerly, small schools still face handicaps in attracting well-trained, fully-certified candidates. Studies indicate that small districts are often forced to assign teachers subjects for which they lack certification. Studies also reveal that a greater percentage of teachers in larger school districts possesses masters' degrees and beyond.

The strength of the educational program depends upon schools having the strongest professional staff possible. Unless a district can offer an attractive educational program, not only will teachers be hard to get, but hard to keep.

Summary

In this series of articles the Western New York School Development Council has taken a careful look at the implications of school district reorganization. We began with the assumption that a more successful and fulfilling life will result from having the best possible education.

Because of our rapidly changing society and the needs that develop from such change, the small school district is not adequately equipped to train students for the complex and diverse roles they will encounter. Larger districts are in a better position to meet this challenge.

School district reorganization has been New York State policy for many years. Because of today's high cost of education, the State discourages small school districts on the grounds that they offer inadequate and inefficient programs. Impending cutbacks in state aid threaten all school districts but, if implemented, spell financial disaster for small schools.

On the other hand, the State encourages the formation of larger districts by offering inducements for school district reorganization. The State will pay special building and incentive aid to those districts willing to reorganize before September 1, 1970. These incentives more than compensate for any initial costs of reorganization and would greatly reduce local tax rates for as long as 15 years.

A comparison of the costs of operating small and large districts was made. We indicated that the basic cost difference, once reorganization incentives have been paid, is in the ways in which these school districts elect to spend their money.

For the same cost, larger school districts are able to offer many more opportunities to their students. Programs are enriched and students have a broad range of courses tailored to meet their individual needs. The opportunity to participate in a fuller athletic program and a more diverse co-curricular program is available to students attending larger schools.

When the performance on standardized tests of students in school districts of both sizes was compared, the enriched curriculum appeared to pay off. A greater percentage of students from larger districts received regents scholarships than did those in small schools.

In addition to offering its students an enriched curriculum, the larger district was able to offer its professional staff a number of

advantages. More specialists and supportive personnel were employed by the larger districts. More teachers were teaching subjects for which they were fully certified.

When all the educational advantages available to students in a larger district are combined, the alternatives become clear. The larger district can offer a stronger and more varied program which is better suited to each student's needs. It can do this with no increase in expenditure and, because of incentives, with considerable decrease in taxes.

It is nearly impossible for a small district to offer its students all the educational opportunities available in a larger district. But if one were to try, it would cost the local taxpayer many times more than he is paying now.